

ALLEGHENY CHINKAPIN

Castanea pumila (L.) P. Mill.

plant symbol = capu9

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Uses

The primary use of chinkapin is for wildlife food and cover. The nuts are an excellent food source during the fall and winter. Squirrels, deer, grouse, bobwhite quail, and wild turkey particularly enjoy the nuts. It can be used as a wildlife component for stabilizing disturbed areas. It can also be planted as a field border, hedgerow, or in backyards and recreational areas.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

Allegheny chinkapin is a spreading shrub or small tree reaching a mature height of 20 feet under ideal conditions. The leaves are similar to the Chinese or American chestnut only smaller. They are 3-6 inches long with pointed teeth.

The nuts are enclosed in spiny burs about an inch in diameter and golden in color. By contrast, chestnuts are about twice as large and flattened on one side. The nuts of Allegheny chinkapin range from chocolate brown to

blackish-brown. Nuts mature in late August in the South and in September and October farther north. Under favorable conditions, seedlings may produce nuts as early as the end of the second or third growing season. However, nut production is not significant until the fourth or fifth year. Six year old plants at the former Quicksand, Kentucky Plant Materials Center produced 1200-1500 nuts per plant.

Adaptation and Distribution

Allegheny chinkapin is adapted to most soil textures, except heavy clays. It performs best on well-drained soils in full sun or partial shade and worst on poorly-drained soils. Its range of adaptation is from northern Florida, west to Texas and Oklahoma, north to Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, and along the Atlantic coastal plain to Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment

One year old seedlings should be planted in the early spring. For maximum fruit production, space plants at least eight feet apart in a row to ideally get at least 50% sunlight. When multiple rows are planted, space rows twenty feet apart. When planting in a sod, scalp the area at least three feet across from each plant. Spread a handful of 10-10-10 fertilizer in the bottom of each planting hole and cover with two inches of soil. Do not allow the roots of the plant to contact the fertilizer material when placing in the hole. Mulch each plant with two to four inches of woodchips, sawdust, or straw.

Management

Control weeds around the newly established plants for at least two years. If growth is not satisfactory in the first two years, apply another handful of fertilizer and work into the soil around the plant.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

'Golden' (GA) was released by the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center in Quicksand, Kentucky cooperatively with the Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station and the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife. Nursery grown plants are available from selected nurseries in the region.

Prepared By & Species Coordinator:

USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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